

# **VCGI Quarterly Operational Overview**

**For the Board of Directors of the  
Vermont Center for Geographic Information, Inc.  
December 2014 (FY 2015)**

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## **Funded Projects**

### **Vermont Agency of Transportation:**

VCGI provides technical assistance to VTrans in the form of GIS support services, RFP development, and other technical support services that enhance Agency and State objectives. VTrans is awaiting the completion of an ROI and parcel lifecycle study for the collection of statewide parcel data. It is anticipated that VCGI would play some coordinating role in a statewide parcel data effort. This is all dependent upon the findings of the ROI and the decision by the state on how, or if, it wants to move forward.

### **Vermont Emergency Management, Homeland Security and Dept. of Public Safety:**

VCGI continues to provide project design and emergency data support to DEMHS and the Dept. of Public Safety for their operations. Ivan Brown is the designated support individual for VCGI to DEMHS data and the Public Safety community.

In November of this year VCGI received approval to proceed on the support contract with DEMHS. The final contract value is still under consideration by DEMHS. Activities include;

- Continue support for development and utilization of the GIS capabilities within the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).
- Support GIS functionality of DisasterLan system.
- Maintain software and system configuration in Virtual Vermont infrastructure.
- Address DPS GIS resource needs.
- Support ongoing DPS mapping and analysis needs.
- Continue support to maintenance of the Critical Facilities data set.

FY15 Contract Value: Unknown at this time, discussions are ongoing. DPS is included in the discussion regarding VCGI support capacity.

### **VT E-911 Board:**

VCGI continues to work with E-911 on the standardization and distribution of their data.

### **VT Dept. of Agriculture:**

VCGI is working with personnel at the VT Dept. of Agriculture to help them develop their internal GIS data and services organization and capacity. Ag is renewing their data

services agreement with VCGI.

### **VT Sustainable Jobs Fund:**

VCGI is working with the VT Sustainable Jobs Fund to define, access, collect and organize their geospatial information in support of their alternative energy development goals. Mike Brouillette is the project manager for this project. VSJF management has asked VCGI for an estimate of the cost to do local solar siting evaluations on a large scale using available LiDAR. MOU Value: \$10,000 (Estimated)

### **Northern Border Region Commission Grant:**

The goal of this program is to increase municipal parcel data infrastructure in the northern 6 counties of Vermont, by providing information, support, and funding to a limited number of priority towns to enable them to create or update parcel data and ensure that it meets the state GIS parcel data standard. Many towns have out of date GIS parcel data, many have only CAD data, some have only paper maps, and some have no parcel maps or data of any kind. The program is a partnership between VCGI and the three northern RPCs: Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC), and the Northeast VT Development Association (NVDA). Initially, the RPC GIS specialists in each region contacted towns they felt were priorities (no data, no maps, or out of date data) to alert them to the grant opportunity.

VCGI requested and received an extension of the grant to March 30, 2016. The extension is necessary due to:

- The time necessary for the digitization work to be completed in towns that currently have only paper parcel maps.
- The time necessary to allow towns to coordinate the grant approval, budgeting and RFP processes in their organizations.

Status on the First Round of grants to towns is as follows:

- Derby: They are working on final report and reimbursement request
- Jay: Still in the midst of parcel mapping, will be done Nov. 30, 2015
- Glover: Still in the midst of parcel mapping, will be done Nov. 30, 2015
- Holland: Parcel mapping is largely complete, will provide final report and reimbursement request before Nov. 30, 2015
- Troy: They are working on final report and reimbursement request
- Waterford: They are working on final report and reimbursement request
- Enosburgh: They are working on final report and reimbursement request
- Sheldon: Still in the midst of parcel mapping, will be done Nov. 30, 2015
- Franklin: They have submitted final report and reimbursement request, and we have received final data!
- Eden: They are working on final report and reimbursement request
- Elmore: They are working on final report and reimbursement request
- Berkshire: Still in the midst of parcel mapping, will be done Nov. 30, 2015

- Wolcott: We have received final data! They are working on final report and reimbursement request.
- Burke: We have received final data! They are working on final report and reimbursement request.

Five more towns have been chosen to receive grants to support their parcel mapping with 50% match. The current status of those towns is as follows:

- Lemmington (has 1980 vintage paper tax map)
- Sutton (has paper tax map plus poor digital data (scanned paper map))
- Swanton (has GIS data that needs to be updated and they are a growth priority in the region)
- Stannard (has paper tax map)
- Brunswick (has CAD data)

VCGI is working on contracts with these towns as well as starting to customize their RFPs. If there are any questions about the status of this grant please contact Leslie Pelch at VCGI.

#### **Partners:**

Each Regional Planning Commission has at least one staff member who serves as a GIS specialist/planner. This mapping expert will serve as technical support to the municipalities who participate in this project. The Outreach Coordinator at the VT Center for Geographic Information will serve as project manager and education lead. The RPC GIS Specialists and VCGI's Outreach Coordinator will also work together as a steering committee.

- Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI)
- Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC)
- Northeast Vermont Development Association (NVDA)
- Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC)

Total proposed value of the grant is \$338,000 with half contributed from participating towns and half from the NBRC. The final amount allocated will depend upon the ability of towns in the northern border region to participate.

#### **NTIA State Broadband Initiative (SBI) Grant Updates:**

The VT Broadband Mapping Team continues to maintain the BroadbandVT.org ([www.broadbandvt.org](http://www.broadbandvt.org)) website. The contract is now in the final year of the grant. While there are still issues that need attention for every delivery the processes in place have stabilized.

The team has completed submission of the October 1 data submission to the NTIA. This was the last statewide broadband availability coverage data collected for the state. Two of the contractors, VTA and Dept. of Public Safety will complete their work on Jan 30, 2015. All other contractors completed their work on September 30, 2014.

VCGI is currently working on the transfer of knowledge and resources to Dept. of Public Service to support Division of Connectivity activities and grant closure. There have been several meetings and webinars with NTIA relating to grant closure responsibilities. The grant will close Jan. 30, 2015 and all grantees have three months to close the grant after that date. I see no reason why VCGI would take more than 2-3 weeks to complete closure. However, NTIA requires that the grantee be available for questions for three months after the close of the grant. In addition, the grantee must be available for program audit for one full year after grant closure. This additional support will have to be worked out with VCGI or ACCD personnel in the transitioned organization.

Total SBI Grant Value: \$3,542,996

## **Core Activities**

### **Staff:**

The staff continues to experience a very difficult situation with very little certainty. It is anticipated that January will bring resolution to many of the questions they have.

The staff and management at ACCD have been very supportive and understanding of the situation. They have been available for questions and provided what information they could. Until the FY16 budget is finally complete and released by the Governor, much of the transition activities are on hold.

### **Board of Directors:**

There were no changes to the Board of Directors in the past quarter.

### **VCGI/ACCD Transition Activities:**

In the past quarter VCGI personnel remained focused on continuance of existing programs, data distributions, improvements to the data access features of the website, and maintaining project revenue at a level that will sustain the organization to July 1, 2015 and beyond.

There continue to be regular meetings between ACCD and VCGI staff for discussion of transition planning and strategic planning.

### **Imagery Data Program:**

The statewide orthophoto imagery is made available free to the RPCs, and Towns in uncompressed format. The public has access to the same data in compressed format through our free data download capability and anyone may purchase the data in uncompressed format on a hard drive at very reasonable prices.

Color and infrared ortho imagery was successfully acquired in the Spring of 2014 in the NE section of the state. All of the 2014 imagery has now completed corrections after first

QC. Delivery may occur in December 2014. Next year's acquisition is the 5<sup>th</sup> and final coverage for this statewide iteration. Planning and preparation for that effort is already under way. Discussion with the VT Geodetic Survey regarding control target placement for the 2015 acquisition over Bennington and Windham counties has already started.

Preliminary recommendations for the FY2016-2017 Capital Budget were required to be submitted in mid-November. VCGI submitted a preliminary request for the next iteration of statewide orthophotography to be acquired at an upgraded resolution of 30cm (current resolution is 50cm). Based upon rough estimates supplied by the private sector for statewide 30cm imagery, 5 year aggregated costs would increase from approximately \$500K to approximately \$875K. Or, from \$100K yearly to \$175K yearly. VCGI submitted a preliminary recommendation of \$175,000 per year for the Ortho Program Capital Budget starting in FY17. The reasons for doing so are:

- Moving to 30cm will provide significantly increased feature recognition and accuracy for the agencies, towns and professional community.
- This is really a five year decision. In order to maintain equity for all areas of the state any acquisition decision made for FY17 will be consistently applied for FY17 thru FY21.
- The generally accepted standard for other statewide ortho programs is 30cm or lower.
- The estimate supplied was not competitive and I am certain when an RFP goes out the final bid costs will be significantly lower. Those savings can be reflected in the later years of the program budget recommendations.

The Legislature may not accept the increase, obviously that is their decision to make. But VCGI felt obligated to at least make them aware of the prevailing standard, the opportunities offered by an upgraded product, and the length of the commitment being made.

### **Enterprise Geospatial Consortium Activities:**

VCGI continues to provide coordinating support to state agency related Enterprise GIS activities. A complete and up-to date coverage of EGC activities is available at the state's Geopoint GIS Portal to be found here:

<https://outside.vermont.gov/sites/egcgeo/Pages/Default.aspx>

### **Data Initiatives:**

#### **Statewide Parcel Data**

After many years of discussion among the VT GIS community about the necessity for statewide parcel data, there is real movement toward accomplishing that goal. A Statewide Parcel Data Initiative Work Group has been created with representatives from VCGI, several agencies, RPCs, VLCT, and others. In addition, VTrans has discussed providing funding for this effort. They have decided any potential funding would be held for a year pending a formal analysis of the costs and benefits of the project. It was suggested that additional funding be provided by the stakeholders in this project and VTrans cost-shares this effort. The other key consideration is having a plan for

maintenance in place before the work on the project commences, as there is a large risk to develop a dataset without having future updates fully considered.

Organization of the effort is still in preliminary planning stages, but the involvement of so many interested parties across the community combined with the potential for funding makes this effort very promising. Managing the creation of a sustainable statewide parcel data will be a significant effort.

The working group representatives have had discussions with representatives from other states that have achieved the goal of statewide parcels. The effort will require an enormous outreach and coordination effort to be successful. The effort needs to be clearly defined, project phases have to be agreed upon and achievable goals have to be established for each phase. None-the-less the potential for a statewide parcel data set is a very promising development and all parties need to keep the effort moving forward.

### **LiDAR Data**

Status of Fall 2014 Acquisition – The VT LiDAR team, working with representatives from USGS and NRCS, secured all the funding needed for a Fall 2014 LiDAR acquisition. The acquisition was intended to cover a little over 2000 square miles. This coverage will complete the Lake Champlain Basin LiDAR coverage along with additional areas in the center of the state. As of Dec 1, only 20% of that area had been acquired due to weather conditions. It is unlikely the remainder of the coverage will be acquired before the window opens up again next Spring.

USGS BAA - USGS released a Broad Area Announcement to accept proposals for LiDAR acquisition projects in the 50 states. Focus will be on federally designated priority areas of the proposing state. Current designated priority areas in VT are Windsor and Windham counties. The VT LiDAR team put together a pre-proposal as requested under the BAA for acquisition in those areas. Our pre-proposal was approved and we were asked to submit a full proposal. The team is currently looking for funding partners for this acquisition as USGS is prohibited from funding more than 50% of the cost. Final proposals are due Dec. 12, 2014.

### **Conserved Lands**

The conserved lands working group has finalized the conserved land data standard. VCGI is creating an aggregated geodatabase model for population by the contributing organizations.

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## **NTIA State Broadband Initiative Grant Overview**

VCGI, as prime contractor representing the larger team from VT, was awarded Broadband Mapping Grant by NTIA for 3.5M over 5 years. The original award was for 5 years, but only the first 2 years were funded. Subsequent to the first award, in late

September 2010, NTIA awarded additional funding for years 3 thru 5 as an Amendment to the existing grant. VCGI's partners in this grant are the VT Telecommunications Authority, UVM- Center for Rural Studies, VT Dept. of Public Service and VT E911. There is also a significant role for private sector contractors. The full grant covers broadband telecommunications data collection, verification, and display for federal fiscal years 2010 thru 2014.

- VCGI awarded the wireless voice and data propagation mapping and verification contract to a team lead by Pericle Communications Inc.
- VCGI awarded the contract for the development of a BroadbandVT.org Website to a Team lead by Applied Geographics.
- VCGI awarded the contract for marketing support for the project to Marketing Partners.
- The last full delivery of Broadband data, with limited verification, was provided to NTIA in mid-November, 2010. Provider coverage data is being compiled and integrated by VCGI with support from DPS and the Providers themselves.
- DPS, VTA and VCGI have each hired a full time employee, with benefits, to support the State Broadband Data and Development grant activities. The latest data and information relating to the NTIA Broadband Mapping Grant is available at;  
<http://www.vcgi.org/projects/bmi/>
- When the Team was awarded the Amendment in September 2010, all of the proposed initiatives were accepted at the requested funding level with the exception of the e-Vermont School Modernization Initiative which was not funded at all.

The initiatives that were funded thru the Amendment are as follows;

1. Data Collection, Integration, Verification, and Display – Vermont's Broadband Mapping Initiative (BMI) is a collaborative broadband data collection and verification effort involving partners from the public, private and academic sectors. The Team will collect broadband availability data from the Providers and from public sources. Broadband availability data will be verified by drive testing, field checking, public surveys (offline and online), and through interaction with the providers. Data and broadband related information will be made available through the BroadbandVT.org website. The requested amount for this effort is \$1,562,000.
2. Broadband Capacity Building – The Vermont Telecommunications Authority will create a position for a Director of Broadband Coordination and Outreach. The Director will act as a liaison between Providers and government and the bodies they serve to instill the broadband vision, preserve its consistency and create an atmosphere of common mission. The liaison will be a bridge between state offices and regional planning agencies to convey information in both directions about infrastructure, aggregation, adoption and policy efforts. The proposed Director will accelerate opportunities to achieve the outcomes set forth in the VT Telecommunications Plan. The requested amount for this effort is \$531,900.
3. Regional Broadband Planning - Vermont's participating Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) will develop a network of contacts in communities and local sectors to assess where promising opportunities are available to develop broadband adoption and/or

access. Regional Technology Planning Teams will be formed to plan and realize these opportunities. Through these partnerships, groups will have new opportunities to access various technical assistance programs available for others. The Regional Technology Plan will offer the State and other groups a plan for rolling out broadband technologies at the local and regional levels. The requested amount for this effort is \$250,034.